

Poetry.

GAINS AND LOSES.

Come the hours when we sit in the shadow
That falls like the droop of a wing
O'er the nest that is naked and empty,
When the fledgelings have learned how to sing
Then woe is the heart for the old time,
The time that was busy and gay,
With the world and its clamor about us,
And we in the midst of fray.

In the shadow we count up our losses;
We creep where we marched with the best,
O! the ache when we try to walk softly,
The cry of our soul against rest.
And we grieve for the golden heads vanished;
Our children are women and men,
And wistful and deep is the yearning
To have them but children again.

And we fret o'er the fruitless endeavor,
The labor that satisfied not,
Till the shadow grows thicker and longer,
And the blur in our eyes is a blot
On the lingering splendor of sunshine,
That taps with its lances of light
At the shut and barred door of our memory,
An after-glow radiant and bright.

Do we see nothing else but our losses,
We mourning there, fools and purblind,
With the crown and the kingdom before us,
The conflict and turmoil behind?
Shall the harvest lament for the seed time,
The bud be more blithe than the leaf?
Is there joy when the plow breaks the furrow,
And none when the hand binds the sheaf?

O! wings that are folded and drooping,
Spring wide in the evening's uplift;
Reach out to the stars that are showing
The skies in a silvery rift.
No day of our days is so hallowed
As that when we see, just before,
The light in the house of our Father
Shine out through His half-open door.

—Magrret E. Sangster, in *Harper's Bazar*.

Contributions.

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.

J. B. LAIR.

After many years of studying the Bible—and by the Bible—I do not mean the New Testament only, I am persuaded that the secret of understanding the Bible lies in this text.

There are many people who are so conservative that they will never defend a principle. They will admit that this is good and proper and right, but this will do. To be a little more explicit, the sprinkler will grant that dipping is baptism, that it is right, that it fulfills the law, but sprinkling will answer also. These people overlook the fact that there are but two principles taught in the Bible, *good and bad, right and wrong*. This being a fact, there is nothing that *will do*, except that which is *the truth itself*.

That which God intended man to do has been given to him by precept or example, and that which he does not re-

quire to be done was not given at all. By this, I do not mean to prohibit all details, but I do mean to advocate the fact that by living the grand principle of right and truth the details naturally develop therefrom, and they are to be done, and none else are essential. For instance, if we are obeying the truth every legitimate effort that we can, or do make, is perfectly right and proper, and the greater the effort, and the more accomplished the better. But, on the other hand, if we are doing that which is not strictly in harmony with *truth*, the more we do the more harm we do. For instance, let us use our first illustration again. If we are practicing immersion, the proper and correct mode of baptism, the greater effort we make to teach it and have others accept it, the more good we do. But, on the other hand, we are practicing sprinkling, which is not taught in the Bible, the more we teach it, and the more people we induce to accept it, the more we sin. I say sin, for I conceive that, that which is contrary to the precept and example of our Lord is sin.

I would not insist that my text applies to this example, for in this case it is *right*. Clearly against wrong. And this requires only to divide, or decide between *truth* and error.

I conclude, that once we have accepted the whole truth, have been baptized into Jesus Christ, and are led by the Holy Spirit, the great and grand principles of *truth* becomes so clear that there is no occasion to err. And once we have this comprehension, the *mystery* of the Bible clears away, and the little minor details bother us no more. In fact we have no time nor disposition to cavil over little things that we frequently hear discussed. For instance, we have heard people insist on the exact wording of the Lord's prayer, when in fact Christ said pray "after this manner," not *these words*. It is the spirit of the prayer that we need, not the exact wording.

Again, some people spend much time in trying to find out what the lamps are, what the oil is, who has oil to sell, and who goes to buy, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, and the parable of the Ten virgins. Who needs to know what these things mean, if they do mean anything. But it is no purpose of this parable to teach such things. The whole object is to teach a lesson of wakefulness and watchfulness in the Christian life, and these little things such as lamp, oil, etc., do not apply.

Again, we know of prophetic expositors who can see nothing in the vision of Nebuchanezzar, Daniel 2nd chapter, unless they can figure out ten kingdoms, answer-

ing to the ten toes, overlooking the grand fact that this parable is intended to teach us the *character* of the Gentile times, that it was to divide, and sub-divide, grow weaker and weaker, and finally to be smitten and disappear from the stage, just as the chaff is blown by the wind from the threshing floor, whether there be one, ten, or forty kingdoms when their time is full.

Not that we should despise small things, but it is often the case that to enter into these details, we are rewarded by confusion rather than being enlightened on the subject.

It is enough to do the bidding. "To obey is better than the fat of rams." To embrace the TRUTH, and be content with its simple developments is more than one man can comprehend in a life time. I apprehend however, that as a rule, men are not content with the simple truth alone. Men are so constituted, most men at least, that they reserve to themselves the right of discretion. They wish to determine for themselves what they shall do, or what they may not do, regardless of what God has said in the matter.

Like Saul went down to destroy the Amalekites according to God's directions, with great pomp and show, and when he had returned and met Samuel he said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, were witnessing against him. And he explained that these were saved to sacrifice unto the Lord. But this did not save him his kingdom.

"Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." But many will say Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" But to these same professionals the Lord will profess, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7: 21-23.

It is not, therefore, the *professor*, but it is the *doer* of the word that shall be blest in his deeds. The man that rightly divides the word of truth. The man that obeys the word according to the word, and not according to some creed or catechism. That same lucrative mind has invented and embodied things "according to the word." Why "according to it?" Why not have the word itself? The word is not doubtful. All creeds and disciplines are. Let us therefore hold to the word of truth. *That*, and *that* alone. And by the grace of God, we shall, by the word, have a happy admittance into the eternal world.